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Quicksilver Times, Bell System Clash

By Ivan G. Goldman

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Quicksilver Times, a strident enemy of corporate America, has run afoul of one of the biggest corporations of them all—the Bell system.

In its latest issue, the Washington underground paper published an article showing readers how to build a device designed to thwart telephone company computers so they cannot figure out who to bill for long distance calls.

The Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company, according to its spokesman, Fred Langbein, countered by sending agents to all the

tabloid's Maryland and Virginia distributors asking them to cease distribution of the issue dated May 31-June 21.

"We have in Maryland and Virginia statutes making it a criminal offense to sell, offer for sale, loan, or possess plans or instructions for making and selling these devices," Langbein said.

No such law exists in the District of Columbia, said Langbein, but C&P is nonetheless considering asking all Washington distributors, on grounds of "professional ethics," not to distribute the telling issues.

A Quicksilver representative, "Super," an affable

young man in standard long hair, worn T-shirt, jeans and bare feet, yesterday showed a reporter his paper's answer to Ma Bell.

All editions now being sold in Virginia and Maryland, Super said, have two sheets of mimeographed paper pasted across the article, which appears on pages 18 and 19.

One paper says, "Censored, you are not allowed to read the information on this page, says the telephone company. So we glued on an irremovable piece of paper." That paper goes on to explain that there are Maryland and Virginia laws against dis-

tributing information in the "censored" article.

The other glued paper is an "emergency appeal" requesting "a \$5 donation—or more," to "help us fight the phone pigs!! This harassment has cost us loss of distribution, time, and energy."

Super said Quicksilver is in dire financial shape and sells about 45 per cent of its 15,000 circulation in Maryland and Virginia. He said the Quicksilver Collective (once 12 persons, now down to five and one cat) was able to paste its "censored" sheets over all Maryland and Virginia newspapers, Papers, in the District, he noted, are being sold in the uncensored version.

Super charged that the C & P canvassers had "harassed" the distributors, and that one had decided to stop selling Quicksilver as a result of the C & P visit.

Quicksilver lists 12 distributors in Maryland and six in Virginia. None could be reached yesterday. There are 20 retailers selling the 3-year-old tabloid in the District. It is also sold by street vendors and by subscription.

Langbein said yesterday he had not known about the glued-on sheets and he offered no opinion on whether this would satisfy C&P.

"We are not making any threats at this time," Langbein said. Maryland and Virginia, he said, provide penalties of up to a \$500 fine and a year in jail for violation of the statutes.

Langbein said C&P began its canvassing Thursday, the same day Super said distribution of the latest issue began.

Super said the step-by-step, illustrated article was a reprint of one that appeared in the June edition of Ramparts, a national underground magazine.

Under fire from the Bell system, Ramparts recalled 90,000 copies of its June edition from newsstands, but 50,000 subscribers received their copies before the recall. Langbein said 24 other states have laws similar to those in Maryland and Virginia. Said Super: "We didn't know about the law."